

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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JAMES F. RUSLING



# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States

COMMANDERY OF THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA

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MEMORIAL MEETING

FEBRUARY 10 1915

1915



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# Commandery of the State of Pennsylvania

FEBRUARY 10 1915

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## ABRAHAM LINCOLN PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 4, 1861, TO APRIL 15, 1865

Born February 12, 1809, in Hardin (La Rue) Co., Kentucky  
Assassinated April 14, 1865; died April 15, 1865, at Washington, D. C.  
Enrolled by Special Resolution April 16, 1865

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*"Abraham Lincoln and His Religious Faith"*

COMPANION JAMES F. RUSLING, LL.D.



# “ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND HIS RELIGIOUS FAITH”

BY COMPANION JAMES F. RUSLING LL. D.

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“I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true.  
I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live up to  
the light I have.”—A. LINCOLN.

I rejoice to stand here tonight, and to speak the best word I can for ABRAHAM LINCOLN. It was my high honor and great privilege to give him my first vote for President (almost) in 1860, and I have never regretted it—would have been unspeakably sorry always had I voted otherwise. In return he gave me all my commissions (almost), from 1st Lieutenant to Brigadier General, and I shall transmit them to my children as their most precious legacies.

And now let me begin by saying, ABRAHAM LINCOLN commenced life a poor boy—one of the very poorest of the poor—“none so poor as to do him reverence.” He ended it by becoming one of the greatest and wisest of human rulers. Who was he, what manner of man was he, and how did he bear himself, thus to awaken the attention, and command the admiration and affection of his fellow-men?

Of course, we have not time for a full analysis of his remarkable life and character. But suppose we try to weigh and measure him just a little. Suppose we walk around and about him and glance at just a few of his salient features, as if gazing up at some old castle or ancient cathedral, and see what message he has for each and for all of us.

Well, in the first place, glancing at his personal appearance, I would say, confessedly MR. LINCOLN was not a handsome man, as human beauty goes. He had a broad forehead, high cheek-bones, cavernous eyes that closed to a mere line when looking intently at you, a great promontory of a nose, a big mouth, square jaws that could close tightly when required, telescopic arms and legs, and

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## JAMES FOWLER RUSLING

First Lieutenant and Quartermaster 5th New Jersey Infantry August 24, 1861; discharged for promotion June 20, 1862.

Captain and Asst. Quartermaster U. S. Volunteers June 11, 1862; honorably mustered out September 17, 1867.

Lieut.-Colonel and Quartermaster (by assignment) May 27, 1863, to July 7, 1863.

Colonel and Quartermaster (by assignment) April 29, 1865, to January 1, 1867.

Brevetted Major, Lieut.-Colonel, and Colonel U. S. Volunteers March 13, 1865, “for faithful and meritorious services during the war;” Brig.-General February 16, 1866, “for faithful and meritorious services during the war.”

enormous feet, with boots so large he himself often jocosely referred to them as his "twin gunboats."

"Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,  
An eye like Mars to threaten and command"—

these classic qualifications of royal grace and beauty, as catalogued by William Shakespeare, certainly MR. LINCOLN did not possess. No, he did not. He was not ugly—there was no ugliness possible about ABRAHAM LINCOLN. But he was simply homely, in the best sense of that good old Anglo-Saxon word, and

"With his gaunt, gnarled hands,  
His unkempt, bristling hair,  
His garb uncouth, his bearing ill at ease,  
And lack of all we prize as debonair,"

as Punch well described him, when he lay in state beneath the dome of the capitol at Washington, clearly he was not of the man-made town, but of the God-made country, and everything in and about him smacked of the soil. Assuredly MR. LINCOLN was not an aristocrat. Neither was he a groundling. No! But he belonged to that great middle class of Americans, whom MR. LINCOLN was wont to call our "plain people," and among whom he was always candid and proud to include himself. He was not an English country gentleman, like George Washington, dropped down into Virginia; nor a New England patrician, like John Adams; nor a Southwestern swashbuckler, like Andrew Jackson. No! ABRAHAM LINCOLN was none of these things. But he was a child of the people, a true son of the soil, the consummate flower and fruit of our American democracy, the most truly American of all our Presidents, from Washington to Wilson—a man of sound sense, of simple life, and of absolute honesty. Why Sir Galahad himself could not have borne himself more blamelessly in our great War of the Rebellion, nor Sir Lancelot more gallantly. Or as James Russell Lowell well said of him, in contemplating his antique type of conduct and character, "He was one of Plutarch's Men"—one of the kind of heroes and great men that old Plutarch loved to gossip about. And I submit his name will remain a flag among men, around which men will rally and fight for God and Humanity, "till the last syllable of recorded time." In all the changes of his marvellous life, from Illinois attorney to President, he never forgot "the pit from which he was digged," but always quaintly argued: "God must love the common people, or He would not have made so many of us!" And so he believed thoroughly in those heroic lines of Robert Burns, when he magnificently said:

"Is there for honest poverty,  
Who hangs his head and a' that?  
The coward-slave, we pass him by,  
We dare be puir for a 'that;  
And a'that, and a'that,  
Our toil's obscure and a'that,  
The honest man, though e'er so puir,  
Is king of men for a'that!"

Next, I would say, ABRAHAM LINCOLN was not a man of books, but he was a man of brains and ideas. He was not a man of letters, but he was a man of big heart and heroic soul. Of books, indeed, he had but few—the Bible, Shakespeare, Pilgrim's Progress, Æsop's Fables, Weems' Life of George Washington, these were about all. But he had read and studied these thoroughly, and moulded



and shaped and guided his life by them. He was not a college-bred man (no doubt he was sorry he was not—he would have been supremely glad to have been a Pennsylvania man or a Princeton man). He knew little about art, and science, and literature; but he knew human nature and believed in himself and in his fellow-men and in God. Of early education, strictly speaking, he had but little, but did his best with what he had, and strove to supplement it by reading and studying at night after a hard day's work was over. He cyphered out his mathematics on boards and shingles with a piece of charcoal, by the light of pine-knots, as he was too poor to afford a slate and candle even, and often walked ten miles to borrow an English grammar or a copy of Euclid. But he rose to be a good Springfield lawyer and Illinois member of Congress, and to charm the world by the spell of his eloquence. His oration at Gettysburg, over the graves of our fallen heroes there, in commemoration of their valor and patriotism, ending with his simple but sublime plea for our “government of the people, by the people, for the people,” will live in history while our English Bible and Shakespeare endure, and will rank him with Pericles, Demosthenes and Cicero, and the world's greatest orators forever. So, too, he believed in the Ten Commandments, and in the Sermon on the Mount, and in our American Declaration of Independence as the best political exposition of them both; and hence his own great declaration (worthy to be writ in letters of gold, with the pen of a diamond, on the very dome of the sky, where all men may read and remember it): “I would give to every human being a fair start and an equal chance in the race of life—however poor, however humble, or however black. And then, may not the Devil take, but God help the hindmost!”

Hence, instinctively, he early took his stand against the institution (or rather the “destitution,” as Emerson well termed it), of African Slavery, and when in his young manhood he went down the Mississippi on a flat-boat to New Orleans and saw Americans selling men and women and little children on the auction-block like “dumb driven cattle” (I myself have seen the same), he indignantly declared, “I hate that inhuman and wicked institution, and, if I ever get a chance to hit it, I will hit it hard.” And afterwards, when he did get the chance, during our War of the Rebellion, he did “hit it hard,” and though he fell by the foul bullet of an assassin, he went up to the Judgment-seat “bearing in his hands, the broken chains of four million of his fellow-men!” How St. Peter must have hastened to throw wide the gates of Paradise, as he approached. And how all the heavenly arches must have rung with acclamations as he strode up the golden streets to his appointed place. For if ABRAHAM LINCOLN did not get into Paradise, after all he was and did and suffered for his fellow-men, I confess I don't see much use for Paradise, nor much chance for anybody else ever getting there.

Next, I would say, ABRAHAM LINCOLN was essentially of a large and roomy nature—full of the breath of the prairies and the mountains. He was cast in a large mould. He was built on a big scale. He stood 6 ft. 4 in. in his stockings, and was every inch a man. And he believed in the Union, our whole Union, and nothing but the Union. He could not do a small or mean thing, if he wanted to, and he never wanted to—was not built that way. His patriotism was not confined to the narrow limits of his own state, but embraced all our broad states and territories, from the blue waves of the Atlantic to the golden slope of the Pacific, and from the glittering glaciers of Alaska to the orange groves of Florida. He did not think South Carolina-way nor Illinois-way, but he thought “con-

tinently," as George Washington said of Alexander Hamilton. He believed with Euclid, that the whole is greater than any of its parts; that this Union of States is greater than any one State; and that the United States has as much right down South, as "down South" has in the United States; and so he sent Grant and Sherman and the Boys in Blue down there to teach her that great lesson, and they taught it thoroughly—at Vicksburg, Chattanooga, and elsewhere. He did not trouble himself with the vexed question as to whether the "Constitution follows the Flag," or the "Flag follows the Constitution;" but he held that they are both, now and forever, one and inseparable, and he did not withdraw his strenuous hand until he had made them so over every foot of American soil. He did not carry his eyes in the back of his head, but looked before and around, as well as behind, and statesmanlike saw the end even from the beginning. He lifted his eyes above the smoke, and the noise, and the turmoil of the titanic conflict that raged around him, and saw the coming glories of the American Republic—saw a great and re-united nation, of over a hundred millions, one and inseparable from sea to sea, without a foe to oppose her, with the Stars and Stripes streaming over her, with no slave upon her soil, resplendent in her spotless robes of liberty and justice, like a fair young matron, with the smile of heaven upon her brow and the broken chains of four millions of human beings beneath her feet—mewing her strength like the eagle's, pluming her wings for new and loftier flights—and like Isaiah of old was enraptured by the beatific vision. He was no mere pur-blind politician, nor cowardly time-server, but looked ahead and aloft at the "eternal verities," as Emerson well says, and hastened to get into line, and to "Forward March" with them. He did not paddle dreamily along shore, waiting for the passing breezes and shifting currents of the hour; but launched boldly out into mid-ocean, trusting to the eternal winds and tides, and to God's everlasting stars of righteousness and justice prevailing there. And so,

"In spite of rock and tempest's roar,  
In spite of false lights on the shore"—

he "bated no jot of heart or hope, but still bore up and steered right forward." And so at last he brought the good old Ship of State safely into port, with the Stars and Stripes streaming over her—"without a stripe erased or polluted, or a single star obscured"—amid the grateful plaudits, not only of all true Americans, but of all lovers of their kind the broad continent across and the wide world over. And tonight (thanks mainly to ABRAHAM LINCOLN) we may well triumphantly sing with Holmes,

"The good Ship Union's voyage is o'er—  
At anchor safe she swings—  
While loud and clear, with cheer on cheer,  
Her joyous welcome rings.  
Hurrah! Hurrah! It shakes the wave,  
It thunders on the shore—  
One Flag, one Land,  
One heart, one hand—  
One nation ever more!"

Next, I would say, ABRAHAM LINCOLN was naturally a sober-minded and serious man, made so by the circumstances of his life and times; but he also believed with the old Scotch philosopher,

"A little fun now and then,  
Is relished by the best of men!"

Or as Shakespeare said of poor Yorick, "he was a fellow of infinite jest," and like William the Silent in his great fight for the Dutch Republic, he saw life from its humorous angle as well as its serious side. In his kaleidoscope of life, he saw not only broken glass, but rubies, emeralds, and diamonds also, in all their changing phases. It was God's mercy that he did, or he would have gone mad, or his big heart would have broken beneath the stress and strain of our great War. Like a true Westerner, he loved a good joke or little story, and knew when and where and how to tell one. When badgered by office-seekers and contractors, he used to say jocosely: "Why, gentlemen, I would like to oblige you, but really I have no influence with this Administration!" So, in the winter of 1861, when the Confederates were practically besieging Washington and McClellan would not move, he wrote him: "If you are not going to do anything with our Grand Army of the Potomac, I would like to borrow it myself for a little while!" So, in 1862, after Donelson and Shiloh, when Grant was our only fighting general, and his enemies accused him of over drinking, his reply was: "Yes, but he fights! He fights! I wish I knew what brand of whiskey he drinks! I would send a keg of the same kind to all our other generals!" So, in 1863, when gold had gone up to 250 and was still mounting skyward, a deputation of bankers from Philadelphia and New York went down to Washington, and besought him to order Secretary Chase to sell the gold in the Treasury, in order to bring its price down again. One of the bankers present (afterwards a U. S. Senator), told me this story himself, and, of course, it is authentic: It was midnight, of a hot summer night, he said, and Mr. Lincoln had risen from his bed, and met us in his office in the White House, with only an old dressing gown about him and a pair of old slippers on his big feet. He listened to us all attentively, and when we got through, replied: "Well, now, gentlemen, of course, I would like to oblige you, but it is clearly impossible. It is not good policy to interfere with one's Cabinet officers. They are all big men, and like to boss their own jobs, and that's right! There's Seward now, he runs our Foreign Affairs, and it won't do to interfere with him—he would get mad and "swear like a trooper," if he is a good churchman. There's Stanton, he runs the Army, and it won't do to interfere with him. He would bite your head off! There's Welles, he runs the Navy, and it won't do to interfere with him. And there's Chase, he runs the Treasury—makes all our greenbacks and pays all our bills—of course, it won't do to interfere with him—a very big man. Of course not. He is a very obstinate man, and very ugly when he gets mad, if he is an Episcopalian! But you go over to the Treasury Department and see Chase, and if he is willing to sell his gold, I have no objection. But I can't overrule him—clearly that would never do! But, if you want me to, I will tell you a little story."

Of course, we all said we would have his "story." And MR. LINCOLN resumed:

"When I was living out in Illinois, before I came here to Washington to be bothered with all sorts of smart men and have all kinds of hard nuts to crack, one year a dreadful disease broke out among our swine, and we lost pigs by the hundreds and thousands. We tried all sorts of remedies, but none of them seemed to do much good, until one day a slick Yankee came along from the East and he advised us to cut off their tails, and that would stop the disease. And so we cut off their tails, and that did seem to stop the disease for that season. But the next season, when the disease broke out again, unfortunately our pigs had no tails to cut off!

"Now, it is all very well for you gentlemen to advise us to sell the Treasury gold to bring down the price of gold on Wall Street. But suppose we lose a battle or two, as seems likely now and then, with our average Brigadier-Generals, and gold goes up again? Why then we would have 'no tails to cut off,' and gold would mount higher than ever!"

So, in 1864, when they tried to dissuade him from running for President again, in the midst of our great Civil War, he humorously replied: "Do you think it good policy to swap horses while crossing a river?" So, in 1864, as the political campaign wore on, when asked whether he wasn't anxious about the result, he answered: "It is a good plan never to cross Duck River until you come to it!"

So, in 1864, when his political opponents declared the war was a failure, his simple reply was: "Well, gentlemen, Grant was not a failure; Sherman was not a failure; Meade was not a failure; Sheridan was not a failure; and so, gentlemen, you may fool some of the people all the time, and all the people some of the time. But you can't fool all the people all the time." And soon Sherman telegraphed:

"Atlanta is ours and fairly won," and then he went

"Marching through Georgia!"

"How the darkeys shouted when they heard the joyful sound;

How the turkeys gobbled which our commissaries found;

How the sweet potatoes even started from the ground,

When we were marching through Georgia!"

So, one day an old country-woman, foot-sore and travel-stained, with walking all the way down from New Jersey, arrived in Washington and made her way to the White House. She inquired for the President, and was told by his private secretary to take a seat—he was engaged just then. And so she sat down and waited all day, while others came and went (diplomats, army officers, etc.), but at last she was admitted to MR. LINCOLN. "Well," he said kindly, "mother, what can I do for you?" "O," she replied, "MR. LINCOLN you can do a great deal for me. My son John is a soldier in the 7th New Jersey and they are going to shoot him, and I want you to save him."

"Why, how is that? What has he been doing? What are they going to shoot him for?"

"Why, you see, it is this way. His regiment went on a long march—marched all day and part of the night—and when they halted, the rest of them lay down and went to sleep. But John and some others were put on guard as sentinels, and John walked his beat for a while, but got tired, and sat down for a little rest, and fell asleep, and while he was sleeping the officer of the day came along and found him, and they arrested him and put him in the guard-house, and court-martialed him, and ordered him to be shot, and it is not right, and I want you to save him. John has always been a good boy. His father was killed on the Peninsula. His brother died in hospital. And John is all I have left. And he is a good boy—sends nearly all his pay home—helps with my rent, and grocer bills—and I am getting old and can't work as I used to—and now if they shoot John, I shall starve and have to go to the poor-house, and that is not right. Now won't you please help me save John? Our Member of Congress has been down here, but Mr. Stanton would not see him, and said John must be punished. And so I have come down here myself—walked all the way from New Jersey to see what you would do for me."



"But don't you know he has been guilty of a grave offence—'sleeping on post'—a very grave military offence? He was put there to safeguard the Army. Suppose General Lee and his army had come up just there, and found John asleep, and got inside our lines, they might have surprised General Meade and our army, and worked great havoc."

"Yes, but General Lee and his rebels didn't come up, and didn't surprise Meade and our boys, and there wasn't any havoc, and so I don't see why they should now shoot poor John. He didn't do any harm. He is a good boy, and he didn't mean to go asleep. And now, MR. LINCOLN, O won't you pardon him?"

"No, my good woman, I can't do just that. What would Stanton and Meade say? But I will telegraph General Meade to suspend his sentence, and that will be all right."

"No, MR. LINCOLN, that won't do. Gen. Meade might not get it, and you might forget, and they would shoot John after all."

"O mother, don't you worry about that. Gen. Meade will get it today, and I shall not forget—I am not built that way. If the facts be as you say, they won't shoot John, until I order him shot. And if they don't shoot him until I order him shot, he will live to be an old man! And besides the war will soon be over now, and the soldiers will all go 'Marching home' and John along with them."

"Say, Clerk," turning to one of his Executive Clerks, "send this old lady down to the Soldiers' Home near the New York Station, and ask them, in my name, to give her supper, and lodging, and breakfast, and tomorrow morning get her a pass over the railroad to New Jersey wherever she wants to go." And then turning to the old woman he said very graciously, "There, mother, that is all I can do for you today, good-bye."

And so with a "God bless you" and streaming eyes she bade MR. LINCOLN "good-bye," and the great President saved the life of another Union soldier.

Next, I would say, it is true ABRAHAM LINCOLN was not a member of any of our orthodox churches, and because he was not, some of our small philosophers and half-baked journalists have taken it upon themselves to declare he was only an old-fashioned infidel; or modern agnostic (or theologic know-nothing) after all. Well, as to that I would say, I do not think it would be difficult to construct an argument to the contrary, from his public addresses and great state papers alone, in support of his substantially Christian life and character. Pardon me while I cite just a few of his remarkable utterances along this line, and see if we can grasp their lofty meaning and significance. For example, before the war, in 1858, in his great debate with Stephen A. Douglas, he said: "I know there is a God and that He hates injustice and slavery. Judge Douglas says he doesn't care whether slavery is voted up or voted down, but God cares and humanity cares, and Christ cares, and Christ was God, and I care, and with our Heavenly Father's help, I feel sure in the long run, we shall not fail." Surely that does not sound very much like infidelity or agnosticism. So, also, what else did he mean when after his first election he left Springfield for Washington, in bidding his old neighbors and friends good bye at the railroad station in February, 1861, he besought them "to pray" for him, that he might have the same "Divine guidance and assistance" George Washington had had, "without which (he said) he could not hope to succeed, but with which success is certain?" Now, what did he mean by that? So, also, in his great Proclamation of Emancipation in 1863—one of the greatest

state papers ever penned by the hand of man—whereby he struck the chains from the limbs of a whole race, he wound it up by declaring, "And upon this act sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of my fellow-men and the gracious favor of Almighty God." Surely, that does not sound like agnosticism, but rather like John Knox, and the best and bravest of his old Scotch Covenantors.

So, also, in his last great inaugural in 1865, when Sherman was yet marching up through the Carolinas and Grant was yet hammering away at the gates of Petersburg, he said, as if with prophetic vision: "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we have begun and a just and lasting peace will yet come to all of us." Why! this does not sound like agnosticism, but rather like a good old orthodox Baptist praise and prayer service. So, also, he said to a deputation of Methodist ministers, who called on him at the White House during the war, with Bishop Ames at their head, "It is no fault of others, that the Methodist Church sends more soldiers to the front, more nurses to the hospitals, and more prayers to heaven in behalf of the Union, than any other church in the land." And then he added, in a spirit worthy of the immortal LINCOLN, "God bless the Methodist Episcopal Church!" And then he also quickly added, with a shrewdness and sagacity worthy of the consummate politician he was: "And God bless all our churches, and blessed be God, who in this hour of trial hath given us the churches!" Surely this is not agnosticism, but it sounds like John Wesley and Chaplain McCabe, and good old orthodox Methodist Camp Meeting preaching. So, also, he said to his old Kentucky friend Joshua Speed, who caught him one day at the White House reading the Bible: "Yes, Joshua, I am reading the Bible. It is a good book. Take all of this book upon reason that you can, Joshua, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a better and happier man."

Now, I submit, what do all these things mean, and many others like them had I time to cite them? Do they mean that MR. LINCOLN was only a colossal hypocrite and stupendous humbug after all, which seems unthinkable? Or rather do they not mean, that in all these sublime utterances, he was still "Honest Old Abe" the same as in all the other acts and facts of his remarkable life? If anybody still doubts, then I beg to put myself into the witness box, and to testify to what I myself heard him say, with these two ears of mine, down yonder at Washington, on Sunday, July 5th, 1863—the Sunday after the battle of Gettysburg. Now this is not a fairy tale or good Sunday School story. But the very "truth of history"—"the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." General Sickles of New York, who commanded the Third Corps, had arrived in Washington that morning, with his right leg shot off at Gettysburg, and being on his staff (his Corps Quartermaster), I naturally called to see him at his private quarters on F Street, nearly opposite the Ebbitt House. While there his excellency the President was announced by the orderly at the door, and immediately afterwards MR. LINCOLN was ushered into the room. They shook hands gravely but cordially (for they were good friends), and then MR. LINCOLN asked him how he had been wounded, how he was getting on, how the army was doing, how it was getting on, what General Meade was going to do with his great victory, and so on, and then presently Sickles roused up (he was lying on an Army stretcher, with a

cigar between his fingers, puffing it leisurely, with his servant wetting his fevered stump now and then with water), and eagerly inquired:

"Well, Mr. President, what did you think about Gettysburg?"

"Oh," he replied, "I did not think much about it. It did not trouble me."

"Why, how was that, Mr. President? We were told up there that you people down here were a good deal worried about Gettysburg."

"Yes, some of us were rattled a little. Seward was. Stanton was. Welles was. And they went so far as to order a gunboat up here from Fortress Monroe, and to put some of the Government archives abroad, and wanted me to go on board too. But I told them no, I wasn't going on board of any gunboat, and that I had no fears of Gettysburg!"

"Why, how was that, Mr. President? It seems very extraordinary."

"Well, I will tell you," he said after a pause, sobering up his long countenance and folding his telescopic arms a little, and crossing his prodigious legs: "I don't want you or Rusling here to say anything about this now. It might get out, you know, and get into the newspapers, and then the politicians would all be laughing at me—especially those on the other side. But the fact of the business is, that in the very pinch of your great campaign up there, when everything seemed to be going wrong—when Baltimore was threatened, Philadelphia menaced and Washington in great danger—when I had done everything I could to support Gen. Meade, raking and scraping together all the soldiers I could find, and there was nothing else I could do—almost despairing of things—I went into my room one morning and locked the door, and got down upon my knees, and prayed Almighty God for victory at Gettysburg. I told Him our war was His war—that our cause was His cause—but that we could not stand another Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville. And I then and there made a solemn vow with Him, that if He would stand by you boys at Gettysburg, I would stand by Him. And I don't know how it was—I can't explain it—it is not for me to say—I am not much of a 'meeting man'—but as I wrestled with my Maker in prayer (wrestled hard, too, like Jacob of old), after a while a sweet comfort crept into my soul, that God Almighty had taken the whole business there into His own hands and that things would come out all right at Gettysburg!" And then he added, "And He did stand by you boys, and now I will stand by Him!"

There was a silence for a minute or two, which nobody seemed inclined to break. MR. LINCOLN evidently was communing with the Infinite One again. In all this conversation he did not speak flippantly, but with a dignity and solemnity worthy of the chief executive of this great Republic, and his face now shone as the face of Moses might have shone when he came down from Mt. Sinai. And then presently Sickles turned over on his stretcher, still whiffing his cigar, and again inquired,

"Well, Mr. President, what news have you from Vicksburg?"

"Oh, I don't know," MR. LINCOLN gravely answered. "Grant is in command down there, and keeps 'pegging away' at the Confederates, and I rather think before he gets through he will 'make a spoon or spoil a horn,' as we say out West. Some of our folks want me to remove him, but I kind of like Grant—U. S. Grant, United States Grant, Uncle Sam Grant, Unconditional Surrender Grant (and he chuckled over Grant's name and initials). He doesn't bother me all the time about 'reinforcements,' but takes what troops we can send him, and does the best he can with what he has got. And if he only does this Vicksburg job—and

I don't care much how he does it, if he only 'does it right'—why then Grant is my man and I am his man the rest of this war." "Besides," he added, "I don't want you to say anything about this either, but I have been praying over Vicksburg too—have told our Heavenly Father how much we need it—how it would bisect the Confederacy, and let the Mississippi flow unvexed to the sea, as it ought to—and it is kind of borne in upon me, that somehow or other we are going to win at Vicksburg too." This was on Sunday, July 5th, 1863. He did not then know that Vicksburg had already fallen the day before—on that memorable 4th of July, 1863—and that a gunboat was already on its way up the Mississippi to Cairo, with the glorious news that was soon to thrill the nation and the civilized world through and through.

Now, what did MR. LINCOLN mean by all this historic conversation? I have given you his exact words—ipsissima verba—to the very best of my knowledge and recollection, and General Sickles in his life-time corroborated them many times over, both publicly and privately. I was only a youngster then—only a Lt. Colonel and Chief Quartermaster. But I kept both ears wide open, and took it all in, as a great historic event, and the same night wrote home to my father about it, and he preserved my letter until I came back from the war, when he returned it, and I have it still. Now, was MR. LINCOLN trying to deceive and humbug us— isn't this unthinkable? Or rather was he not speaking the truth out of the very depths of his heart and soul, and in all this remarkable talk, was he not "Honest Old Abe," too?

Now, I suppose, it is true that in his early manhood—in his young and "vealy" days—MR. LINCOLN did have his doubts and questionings theologically, as many brainy young men have had and others will have. But when he grew older, and he came to face life as it is, all these things flew out of his head, as bats fly out of a darkened chamber, when the windows get open and the sunlight streams in, and in the end he became a God-fearing, God-praying, God-trusting American citizen, as we all ought to be. And especially the War of the Rebellion, as it swept forward and overwhelmed him—when Sumter fell, and Bull Run failed, and Gettysburg and Vicksburg trembled in the balance—and all History was gazing upon him—with its burdens and cares, and awful anxieties and appalling uncertainties—all this sobered and steadied him, and anchored him back upon God as the Supreme Ruler, both of men and of nations, as a like experience sobered and anchored William of Orange, and Oliver Cromwell, and George Washington, and in the end he became a ruler worthy to rank with even these. Of all the figures of our great War, ABRAHAM LINCOLN alone looms up loftier and grander, as the decades roll onward. Our great captains, with their guns and drums, "disturb our judgment for an hour, and then silence comes"—Grant, Sherman, Meade, all gone, and in a century or so Grant and Meade alone will remain. Our great statesmen—Seward, Stanton, Sumner, all these too are gone, and in a century or so Stanton alone will remain. But ABRAHAM LINCOLN still stands as some antique tower—like some old castle or great cathedral,

"With storied windows richly dight,  
Casting a dim religious light"

and will forever stand, looming up loftier and grander as the centuries roll onward, beckoning us onward and upward to a higher patriotism and a loftier manhood. What an example and an inspiration for every American, man and boy, and what a hope and a joy for each and everyone of us!



Well may we say of him, as Coleridge said of that true knight of old:

"His good sword is rust,  
His bones are dust,  
His soul is with the saints, we trust."

Or, in the statelier lines of Alfred Tennyson on the great Duke of Wellington, when he lay in state beneath the dome of St. Paul's, while all England bowed in sorrow:

"While the races of mankind endure,  
Let his great example stand—  
Colossal, seen of every land,  
And make the soldier firm, the statesman pure,  
Till in all lands and through all human story,  
The path of duty be the way to glory.

And let the land whose hearths he saved from shame,  
For many and many an age proclaim,  
At civic revel and pomp and game,  
And when our long illumined cities flame,  
Our ever loyal, iron-leader's fame,  
With honor, honor, honor, honor to him,  
Eternal honor to his name.

But let us speak no more of his renown,  
Lay our earthly fancies down,  
And in the vast cathedral leave him,  
God accept him, Christ receive him!"

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